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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000774

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4, 2007

In Today's Papers

Erdogan Meets Assad in Aleppo

All papers report on Tuesday, Prime Minister Erdogan met with President Bashar al-Assad and Prime Minister Farouk al-Shara during a visit to Syria to attend the inauguration of a soccer arena in Aleppo where a friendly game between Fenerbahce and al-Ittihad, soccer teams from both countries. Assad and Erdogan reportedly discussed the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Lebanon, and Iraq. Turkish Energy Minister Hilmi Guler told reporters in Aleppo that Turkey and Syria were considering jointly building a dam on the Orontes (Asi) River. Guler also said Egyptian natural gas will be transported to Turkey through Syria.

Erdogan on Military Coup Allegations, Turkish Presidential Elections

All papers report that en route to Syria, Prime Minister Erdogan told journalists on board his plane that prosecutors should investigate recent allegations that a military coup against the AKP government was planned in 2004, complaining that prosecutors were neglecting their duties. Weekly political magazine Nokta had recently raised the military takeover allegations by publishing a diary attributed to retired Naval Forces Commander Admiral Ozden Ornek.

Erdogan also said his ruling AKP's candidate for the presidency will be determined by the party administration. Erdogan is to discuss the matter with the heads of AKP provincial branches on April 11. The AKP governing body meeting, scheduled to be held April 6, has been postponed to April 18, say papers, prompting speculation that Erdogan will wait until the last possible moment for an announcement before the deadline for nominations, April 25. Papers say Erdogan has been angered by reports that Inonu University (in Malatya) has put off exams to enable students to join a rally in Ankara on April 14. The demonstration aiming to block Erdogan's presidential aspirations will be held by the Ataturk Thought Organization with the expected participation of over 100 NGOs.

Papers report the main opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal continued his criticism of Erdogan and the AKP conduct on the eve of the forthcoming presidential elections. Baykal accused the AKP government of "besieging the media," saying "Turkey's leading media conglomerate is under government financial investigation, and another one has been seized by the State," [a referral to government fund TMSF's recent seizure of the Ciner Media Group which owns over 60 media outlets including mass circulation Sabah daily and national ATV channel due to alleged financial and management illegalities].

DTP Arrests Continue

Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report some 1000 people including eight Kurdish party DTP mayors held a demonstration yesterday in Cizre Township in the southeastern Sirnak province to protest the arrest of Cizre mayor Aydin Budak for praising the PKK's imprisoned leader Abdullah Ocalan during the Nevruz celebrations in late March. Budak was arrested yesterday on charges of "praising a crime and a criminal." The group released a statement and held a short sit-in protest in front of the Cizre Municipality, and then dispersed. Papers report another five DTP members were detained in Cizre.

Meanwhile, 17 suspects, including Salih Karaaslan, the Ankara head of DTP, have been taken into custody for staging, during Nevruz celebrations in Ankara, demonstrations in which the terrorist organization was praised.

Papers also report the Diyarbakir prosecutor has demanded up to 15 year prison sentences each for 53 DTP mayors who, last year, sent a letter to Denmark's prime minister asking him not to close the Copenhagen-based Roj TV, viewed as a mouthpiece for the PKK by the

ANKARA 00000774 002 OF 002

Turkish government.

PKK Members Captured in Syria

All papers report seven PKK terrorists, including their leader, Sadik Aslan, were captured in Syria in a joint operation of Turkish and Syrian security forces as a "goodwill gesture" on the eve of the visit of Prime Minister Erdogan to Damascus. The operation was launched based on information provided by a PKK member, Mustafa Tas, who was captured in Sanliurfa four months ago. Papers expect Turkey to ask for their extradition.

Editorial Commentary: What is the US's Ultimate Aim for the Kurds? Kamuran Ozbir writes in the nationalist Ortadogu: "US Assistant Secretary Dan Fried says 'the PKK issue is hidden in more serious

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and more complicated Turk-Kurd issues.' The US considers the PKK a terrorist organization; however, US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack says that the US is trying to find a way to resolve the issue without using force. In fact, there is no other terrorist organization in the world which has such guarantees. Secretary Rice has referred to the Turkey-Iraqi border as Turkey-Kurdistan border. Former US Ambassador to Iraq Khalilzad once referred to Northern Iraq as Kurdistan. Moreover, the US Special envoy for Countering the PKK, General Ralston, at a Congressional hearing said 'We encourage Turkish side and Kurdish side to meet not with the PKK but with the Kurdish Administration, in order to resolve some of the issues.' The US politicians have some vision for Iraq, the Middle East and the future of the Kurds. What is US's ultimate aim for the Kurds?"

TV Highlights

NTV (6 A.M.)

Domestic News

- Turkey's Higher Education Board (YOK) has released a statement denouncing a "populist" government campaign for the opening of 17 new universities despite financial and academic difficulties. YOK will release a declaration on the presidential elections after an extraordinary meeting of university rectors on Thursday.

- On Wednesday, visiting Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser al-Muhammad al-Sabah will meet with his Turkish counterpart Erdogan in Ankara.

- Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, on an official visit in Germany, will travel to Cologne on Wednesday to launch a Turkish project for "e-consulate services."

International News

- President Bush has criticized US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to Syria, saying it sends "mixed signals" to the region and to the government of President Assad.

- French presidential candidate Segolene Royal has announced support for a bill which would bring penalties for the denial of Armenian genocide claims.

- Turkish Cypriot presidential spokesman Hasan Ercakica said a Greek Cypriot goodwill package disclosed this week aimed at blocking cooperation between Turkish Cyprus and the EU.

- Insurgents in Iraq holding hostage a German mother and son say in a new video they are giving Germany a new deadline to pull troops out of Afghanistan or the two would be killed.

WILSON